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TAGS: [PREL](#) [FR](#) [EUN](#) [NATO](#) [KNNP](#) [IR](#) [SU](#) [CD](#) [CG](#)  
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH MINISTER-DELEGATE  
FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS CATHERINE COLONNA

Classified By: AMB Craig Stapleton for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

11. (C) Summary: At a February 3 meeting with the Deputy Secretary, Minister Delegate for European Affairs Catherine

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Colonna affirmed a vision of an ever-deepening European Union despite recent turmoil, stated that the next enlargement should be limited to the Balkan states, and sketched a French vision for NATO that would limit it primarily to classic military operations. She expressed satisfaction with P-5 unity on Iran to date but saw a narrowing path with few prospects for ultimate success. She stressed the importance of U.S. success in Iraq but offered neither optimism nor new French assistance. She expressed satisfaction with U.S.-EU solidarity in the wake of the Palestinian elections and viewed Putin's recent unhelpful statements as deliberate. Finally, while welcoming U.S.-French cooperation on Chad and Sudan, Colonna noted that there is no alternative to Chadian President Deby and implicitly warned against further NATO involvement, while informing the Deputy Secretary of a likely EU role in the DRC. End summary.

Europe

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12. (C) Colonna said the European Union was characterized by fluidity and continuity, but the European integration process would continue. The EU's current difficulties were not of historical significance; if French voters rejected the constitutional treaty, they were not rejecting the idea of Europe. The rejection could be seen positively, as a wake-up call about the need to address the average citizen's concerns. What was needed over the short term, she continued, were concrete projects in specific areas designed to illustrate to European electorates the true utility of the EU. Institutional reform, she indicated, would have to be tackled later.

13. (C) The Deputy Secretary shared Colonna's skepticism on the prospects for pushing ahead with the constitutional treaty notwithstanding the French and Dutch referenda, and asked whether France was considering variable geometries for advancing the EU. Colonna responded that integration needs to continue to ensure that a Europe of 25 -- soon to be 27 -- remained more than a free trade area, although she also asserted that the 25 are already more integrated than were the original 6 or 9 or 12. Calling for flexibility and diversity, she elaborated on the President Chirac's idea of pioneer groups which other member states could join when they wished -- there would be no directorate or two-speed Europe -- to take the lead in specific areas. She asserted there

was no contradiction between such flexibility and deepening.

14. (C) The Deputy Secretary asked how the EU would tackle the issue of increased institutional effectiveness in light of enlargement. Colonna explained the constitutional treaty's mechanisms for increasing the voting weight of the larger member states and for augmenting the number of areas subject to decision-making by qualified majority rather than unanimity. The Deputy Secretary asked whether qualified majority voting would eventually extend to matters of foreign policy. Colonna responded that most member states viewed foreign policy as the last preserve of sovereignty, but explained that the constitutional treaty would have permitted, following an initial consensus decision on an overall policy, subsequent coordination on tactical implementation on the basis of qualified majority voting. She termed the absence of harmonized tax policies an obstacle to competition, while admitting that achieving a common policy would be difficult.

15. (C) Colonna noted the role EU enlargement has played in stabilizing Europe and said that France considered the Balkans as part of Europe. However, the EU played other important roles for its member states and could not be seen primarily as a tool for exporting stability. Enlargement needed to proceed now at a slower pace, since the EU still needed to digest its latest 10 (soon to be 12) members before moving on to the next stage. It was for this reason that the EU had developed its neighborhood policy and was interested in a different relationship with countries such as Ukraine. She suggested that the same considerations should also apply to NATO. The Deputy Secretary said the U.S. agreed on the importance of integrating the Balkan states and conceded that the U.S. tended to view Europe more in terms of strategic stability than internal EU cohesion.

16. (C) Colonna made a point of raising NATO just before the

PARIS 00000854 002 OF 004

meeting concluded. She stated that France had confidence and trust in NATO and was interested in deepening its relationship with NATO. France did not want NATO-EU tensions to interfere with U.S.-EU relations. She informed the Deputy Secretary that France would soon present its "vision" for

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NATO at the February 4 security conference in Munich. She noted France's preference that NATO remain a military organization and engage in other missions only on an exceptional basis. The Deputy Secretary responded that it is important for the EU to develop defense capabilities, including expeditionary capability, and emphasized the importance of finding ways for the EU and NATO to work together. Only then would the EU be able to intersect effectively with NATO. He reminded Colonna of NATO's importance to the U.S. as an organization where political-military and security issues can be discussed more generally; this was not function that the U.S. would want to disappear.

Iran

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17. (C) The Deputy Secretary commented that the Iran issue would be entering a more challenging phase following the IAEA BOG vote that day and expressed appreciation for French agreement to send their Ambassador in Tehran to Washington for consultations on the situation in Iran. Recalling his recent discussions in Beijing, the Deputy Secretary said he had encouraged the Chinese to focus also on Ahmadi-Nejad's potentially destabilizing impact on energy security and regional security. It was also time to think about ways to influence internal Iranian politics, where Russia and China could perhaps play useful roles. He reminded Colonna of the U.S. distinction between the regime and the Iranian people.

¶8. (C) Colonna agreed that the road was becoming narrower in dealing with Iran, stressing the need to maintain dialogue with Iran and unity among the international community. She insisted on the importance not just of support, but active support, from Russia and China. But she concluded that it was not even clear that such unity, even if maintained in the UNSC, would impress Iran. Political Director Laboulaye took a more optimistic line, extolling the unity among the P-5 in evaluating the Iranian threat and working together in New York and Vienna. He said it was appropriate now to look at economic measures, since Ahmadi-Nejad was elected on a social platform and would need to deliver. He doubted that Russia and China would agree on sanctions. Sanctions would be the only real chance to move Iran in the right direction, he said, but it would require heavy lobbying of others.

¶9. (C) The Deputy Secretary agreed with Laboulaye's focus on the "shadow" areas of Iran's social and economic environment, which offered prospects for influencing Russia and China to play more active roles. Modulation would be important, he said, and Russia was a key, since on some issues China would tend to follow its lead. At the same time, he also encouraged the EU to remain closely engaged with China, since China could also help steer Iran in the right direction. Colonna fretted again that, although unity was a precondition for a solution, it was not a solution by itself. She feared that the West would suffer first from economic sanctions, and noted that political sanctions would have little effect on a president who rarely went abroad. The Deputy Secretary noted that some companies were already beginning to pull out of Iran because based on their risk assessments. He expressed the hope that it would be possible -- through P-5 and Indian solidarity -- to exploit Iranian vulnerabilities, without overplaying that hand.

Iraq  
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¶10. (C) The Deputy Secretary outlined the U.S. political, economic and security agendas, saying that 2006 would be a critical year for Iraq. As the situation in Iraq improved, he suggested that the GOF consider how it might help in capacity building in Iraqi ministries, in addition to opportunities for military training. Colonna expressed the hope that the U.S. would succeed in Iraq and said France's special relationship with Iraq had ended with the first Gulf War. She recalled French assistance through debt relief but made no new offers. She described progress in Iraq as slow and filled with more disappointments than good surprises, concluding that France was not very optimistic about the future. The Deputy Secretary responded that that divisions were beginning to develop between Sunni insurgents and Al

PARIS 00000854 003 OF 004

Qaida. He said the U.S. would remain open to further discussions with France.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict  
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¶11. (C) The Deputy Secretary expressed satisfaction with EU and U.S. agreement on key standards for Hamas following its surprise victory in the Palestinian elections. He noted that Olmert would probably follow Sharon's lead in using a mix of unilateral and cooperative steps to move forward. He believed Israel would seek opportunities to work together with Abu Mazen. He pointed out that, for Israel, Ahmadi-Nejad's statements are not taken as merely rhetorical.

¶12. (C) Colonna said France's and the EU's policy was encapsulated in the Quartet declaration and expressed satisfaction that the U.S. and EU were on the same page. She expressed concern about Russian President Putin's recent statements on the Palestinian situation, which she called "different" and probably not improvised. More generally, she expressed concern about overreaction in the Muslim world to

the publishing of anti-Islamic political cartoons. On the Israeli elections, she saw good chances for Olmert to follow in Sharon's footsteps, and agreed he would mix unilateralism with cooperation.

Chad and Sudan  
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¶13. (C) The Deputy Secretary noted the importance of implementation of the North-South Accord in Sudan at a moment when world attention was focused increasingly on Darfur. He said the African Union (AU) AMIS force in Darfur had reached its limits and that it was now time to involve the UN. He assured Colonna of U.S. awareness of the need to support the AU while encouraging it to work together with NATO and the EU to build up the capability of AMIS, particularly in the areas of logistics and planning, as well as funding. The situation was complicated by splits among the various rebel groups. He noted that the advent of insecurity in Chad is problematic and emphasized the importance of staying in contact on this issue. Noting that the UN Special Representative had mentioned the possibility of French engagement through a border force, the Deputy Secretary asked about the French position on Chadian President Deby's strength and the French role in Chad. He also assured Colonna that the U.S. was prepared to discuss Cote d'Ivoire with France.

¶14. (C) Colonna welcomed U.S.-French cooperation to try to address the ongoing situation and agreed on the difficulties inherent in finding a solution. It was important to move forward pragmatically. France agreed that the Africans and the AU needed to take their future into their own hands and underscored that France is participating in Africa as part of international efforts, as in Cote d'Ivoire, and would not allow itself to be in a showdown with any African country. Noting that the Darfur situation cuts across the French position vis-a-vis NATO and the EU, she cautioned against the dangers of too many cooks in the kitchen. She then noted that the EU might soon take on a greater role in the DRC. Finally, she stressed the French view that there were no good alternatives to Deby.

¶15. (U) Participants  
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--France  
Catherine Colonna, Minister Delegate for European Affairs  
Stanislas de Laboulaye, MFA Political Director  
Daniel Parfait, Americas Director  
Gilles Dufeigneux, Cabinet Director  
Yves Oudin, Americas Directorate Deputy Director  
MFA Notetaker

-- U.S.  
The Deputy Secretary  
Ambassador Stapleton  
EUR PDAS Volker  
Michael Matera, D Executive Assistant  
Taiya Smith, D Special Assistant  
Christine Davies, D Special Assistant  
Richard Mills, D Senior Advisor for Public Affairs  
Embassy notetaker

¶16. (U) The Deputy Secretary's party cleared this message.

PARIS 00000854 004 OF 004

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Stapleton